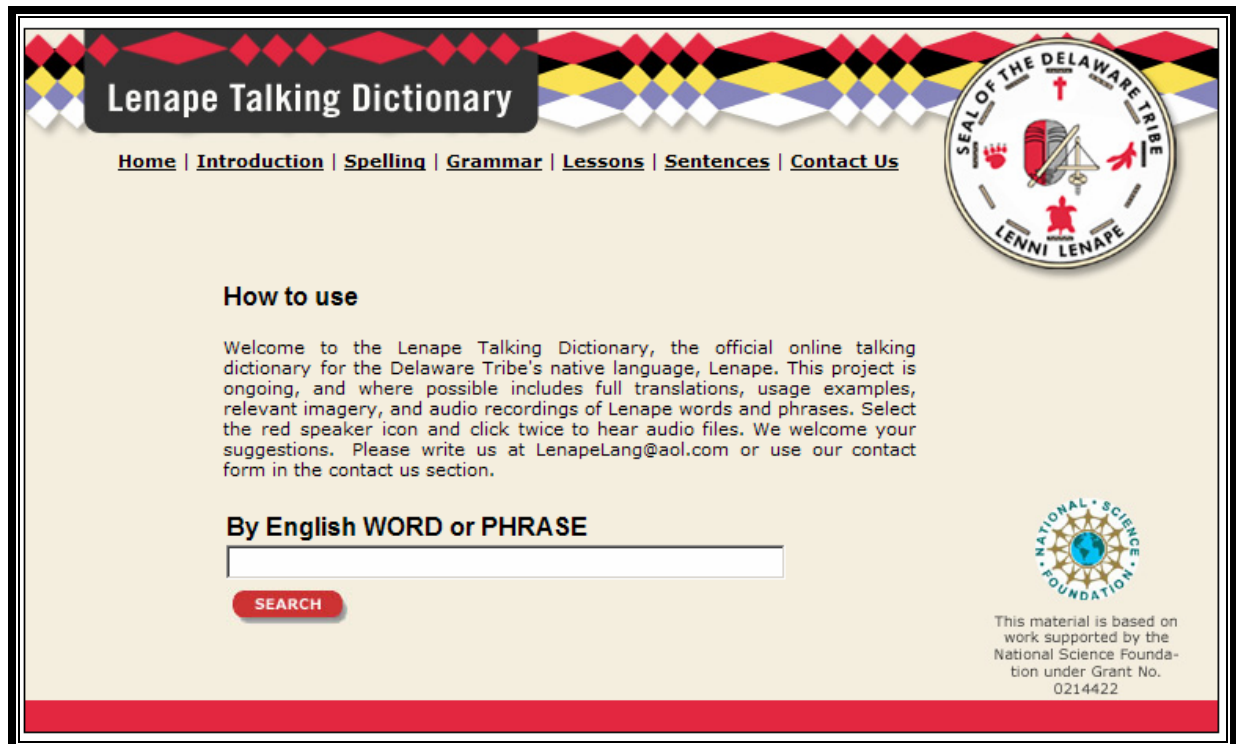


The Lenape Talking Dictionary

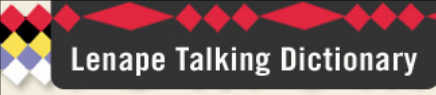
www.talk-lenape.org

by
Bruce Pearson
and
Jim Rementer


This is the Lenape Talking Dictionary. It is a dictionary of Lenape words and sound files so that it is in fact a dictionary that talks. The people who call themselves Lenape, whose name means "The People" are perhaps better known as the Delaware Indians because at the time of the arrival of the white people they were living along the Delaware River in New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. Since then they were pushed into western Pennsylvania, then northeastern Ohio, then Central Indiana, Missouri, Kansas, and finally Oklahoma where their tribal headquarters is now located in Bartlesville, a city just about 50 miles north of Tulsa.



This is the homepage. We should mention that Jim Rementer is the one who came up with the idea and designed the site. It was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation received in 2002, and the dictionary actually came online in December of 2005. It contains at this time about 14,000 words, and roughly 5,000 sound files, and over 1,000 sentence files, all spoken by native speakers of the language. These were members of the last generation which grew up with the language as native speakers, and none are now living as the last native speaker died in 2002.



Lenape Talking Dictionary



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The Lenape Talking Dictionary

Project History: In January, 2002, the Lenape Language Preservation Project received a three-year grant to the National Science Foundation to produce a resource dictionary database of Lenape. We then had a database built to create a **Lenape Talking Dictionary**. Much of the funding has gone to digitizing and preserving our existing audiotapes which were made with native speakers of Lenape.

We had originally planned to make the Talking Dictionary available on a CD, and it will eventually be available in that format. The Internet is available to so many people now and it is basically free, so we decided that more people would benefit by making this available on the Internet. Please visit the tribal website located at www.delawaretribeofindians.nsn.us and look for the link to the Dictionary. This is a work-in-progress so check back often as more words and sound files will be added.

How to Use the Lenape Talking Dictionary

This is the opening page of the dictionary. Just type in the English word you wish to look up:

First we have the instructions on how to use the language dictionary, and we find samples of the pages that the user will find.

The Lenape Speakers in This Talking Dictionary

Around the year 1600 the Lenape language was spoken by thousands of people. Now, the remaining speakers who grew up with Lenape as their first language have all left this life. We can be grateful that some of our elders took the time to try to preserve the Lenape language for us. They did this by teaching classes, making recordings, working with younger tribal members and with linguists.

Below are photographs of two of the main speakers whose voices you will hear in the Lenape Talking Dictionary. The photo shows two of them visiting while at a Stomp Dance.



These are two of the people who provided most of the information used in the dictionary. This is Lucy Blalock, one of the last speakers. She died in 2000. Also shown is Nora Thompson Dean who provided a great deal of information. Jim

was adopted into the Thompson family in the 1960s at a time when Nora's father, James Thompson, was still living. He died several years after Jim was adopted into the family, but during those several years Jim was living in a Delaware speaking household. Bruce has been involved mainly as a linguist.

Lucy began to teach Lenape classes at the Tribal headquarters in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in 1992 under the auspices of the Delaware Tribal Culture Preservation Committee. These continued until May of 1994 when she was no longer able to teach, but the language work continued with some language committee members going to Lucy's home at Quapaw, Oklahoma. We would also like to express our thanks to Dr. David Oestreicher for sharing the recordings of the Lenape language he made with Nora and Lucy.



Lucy Blalock With Part of Her Language Class - 1993

Nora taught Lenape language classes at Nowata, Oklahoma, in the years 1979-80. Mrs. Dean also developed several cassette learning tapes and booklets called the Lenape Language Lessons in 1980. Over the years she also worked extensively with a number of linguists and anthropologists to try to preserve the Lenape language and culture. We would like to

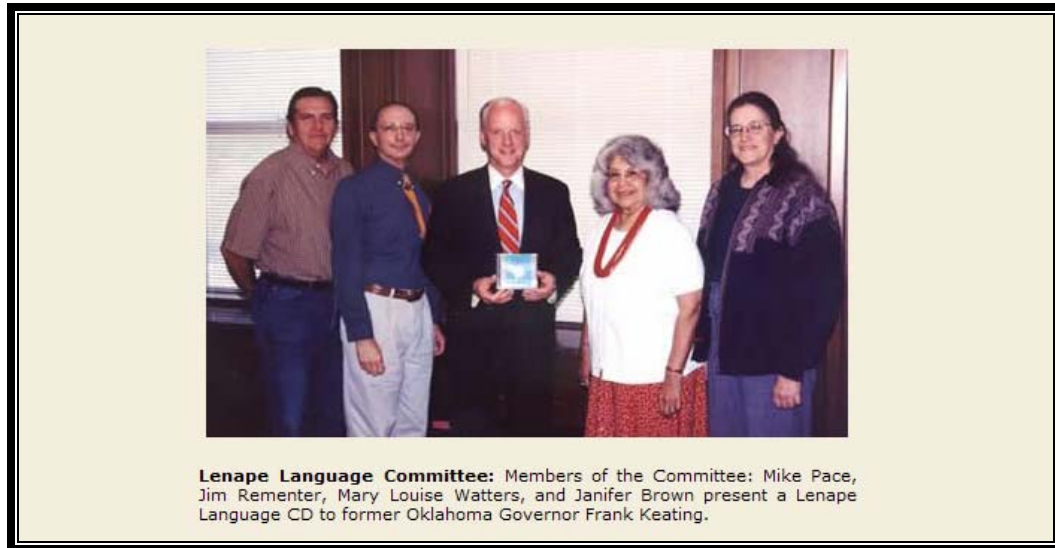
This is a picture taken in 1993 of the Lenape language class taught by Lucy Blalock.



Nora Dean Gives a Lecture on Lenape Folklore at Bryn Mawr College - 1973


This shows Nora Dean teaching a folklore class at Bryn Mawr College.

Other pictures show Nora's brother Leonard Thompson, and other speakers such as Fred Fallleaf, Ollie Anderson, and Freddie Washington. There are several other pictures of the tribal members who have been working on the project, such as Nicky Michael who is also a triathlete, April Daniels, and Jan Brown.



This is the Lenape Language Committee making a presentation to Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating.

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Lenape Spelling System

[Print your own copy of the Spelling System](#)

We have been trying to perfect the easiest orthography possible to use in spelling Lenape words. It is mainly a phonetic alphabet, that is, each letter has only one sound. The alphabet is as follows:

a - ch - e - h - i - k - l - m - n

o - p - s - sh - t - u - w - x - y

The following are the vowels, all the rest are consonants:

a - e - i - o - u

The vowels are further divided by the use of accent marks. The accent marks are only to show vowel quality, and once you have learned the word, they need not be used in normal writing.

The spelling system we use is the spelling system adopted by the tribe's language committee based on English orthography so that the sound that normally written as č is spelled as ch. There are more distinctions than can normally be written by the five vowels of the Roman alphabet so it was necessary to use diacritics to mark the distinctions, but anyone interested in this can look through the spelling system and see how it works.

There is an extensive description of the grammar and how it works, and the key terms. The verb is morphologically complex and the verb contains all the essential information. There are nine positions for verbal suffixes in additional pages in the grammar section.

Other Things to Say When you Meet:

Kèku hàch kuwatu? Kuwatu hàch kèku?	What do you know? Do you know anything?
--	--

Common Answers:

Some common answers to the questions above might be:

Ku kèku Mèsi kèku Xaheli kèku	Nothing This and that Many things
--	--

Small Talk:


Wèli kishku Wèli lòku	It is a good day It is a good evening
--	--

{{Note: In Lenape it would not be common to use these expressions as greetings as is done in English, (Good Day!). They are more like comments on the weather rather than greetings in Lenape.}}

This is a sample of one of the Lenape Language Lessons. You will note that certain items are indicated in red and these are words which have special usage such as the word used for my friend, man-to-man. There is a separate word for my friend, woman-to-woman.

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Sentences

▶	English:	All the animals were killed.
▶	Lenape:	Aèsésák wèmihaok.
▶	English:	Animal ears.
▶	Lenape:	Aèsési hwitaoka.
▶	English:	Tell a story, you know many things.
▶	Lenape:	Achimwi, xaheli kèku kuwatu.
▶	English:	That is so, my (man) friend.
▶	Lenape:	Ahikta, nchu.
▶	English:	It is difficult when one wants to say something.
▶	Lenape:	Ahòt ènta awèn kèku kahta luwèt.

There are over a thousand sample sentences in the dictionary, and we will play a few samples:

Ahchinki nshëshkòmwi èli nipita kchihëleyok.
It is difficult for me to chew because my teeth are missing

Ahopëwe në kàpi.
The coffee tastes strong

Ahowtu, òk ku nulhatu moni.
It is too expensive and I have no money

Ahpu hèch awèn kèski alënixsit?
Does anyone here speak Lenape?

We also have some sample sentences that are corrections that are used in the tribe. It is not clear that all of these are of Lenape origin but these are corrections that many Lenape people believe in. This is the kind of information the parents teach their children, or the grandparents pass on to their grandchildren.

Kàchi michiyàn tipasi xès ènta wëksian, xu kpisëlinko.
Don't eat chicken skin when you're young or your face will be all wrinkled.

We should mention that the design along the top of the page is a traditional Delaware ribbonwork pattern, and the tribal seal is shown in the upper right-hand corner.

Let's play the word for *Mother*. As you can see you do not need to type in the entire word to make it display. And now the word for my mother, Nkahès. Another good thing about this is that you do not have to ask the person you're working with to repeat and repeat the word - the computer is tireless. You can also click on each entry to see additional information about each word.


Under the analysis, and this is a fairly simple construction, the root is Kahès, and this belongs to a class of nouns which must be possessed, so this is *My Mother* with the pronominal prefix for *My*. There are also sample sentences with the words to show how they are used in context:

Neyo nkahès.
I saw my mother

Nkahès mwisa xu pè alàpa.
My mother's older sister will come tomorrow


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Detailed Entry Information

English: boat; canoe
Lenape: mùxul [ni]



Sample Sentences

English: There is the big boat.
Lenape: She ně xinkwi mùxul.

Analysis

Form: mùxul
Structure: mùxul
Meaning: boat

And now we see the word for canoe which is also the word for boat, Mùxul. And the sample sentence with it, "Shè ně xinkwi mùxul - There is a large boat." By clicking twice on the thumbnail picture of the canoe you can enlarge it to see it full size. Also, you do not have to go back to the home page to look up the next word. There is the box at the bottom of the page that you can use to find the next word you want to look up. The word boat itself is a simple morpheme.

Now let's try some birds. Chulëns is Bird, Hinutët is a wren, and Hmukwinùnt is a cardinal, Wisawtayas is a goldfinch, and Opalanie is a bald eagle. If you want to learn more about the word you can click on it and see the word analysis, and in some cases comments about cultural significance. The abbreviation after the word, NA, indicates that the word is an animate noun. Delaware, as with all Algonquian languages, makes a distinction between animate and inanimate nouns.

You can click on "View More" at the bottom of the page to find many, many more words pertaining to birds. Jim happens to be interested in birds so there are many bird names. Nora Dean released a set of Lenape lessons on cassette tapes with booklets and one of the sections was about birds so that made it easy to find a lot of audio files of bird names.

The word we play now is Nitis meaning my friend, man speaking of a man. Here it is self-explanatory given the relationship between the two people. The same for Nichus, my woman friend a woman speaking. A sample sentence:

Nëmilùkw na nichus xaheli lekhikàna
 I gave my woman friend many books.

You will notice the comment at the bottom of the page. This is a special word used between two women, a woman speaking of her woman friend, but also among the Lenape people many women had a man friend who served somewhat as a confidant, someone they can go to with problems they could not discuss with a father or a brother.

A short story about the use of that word that was related to Jim. "A woman many years ago was hoeing in her cornfield, and at that time they only wore deer hide wrap-around skirts, and as she hoed worms kept sticking their heads up out of the dirt and looking up under her skirt, and she didn't like that. She wasn't supposed to go to her father or brother about that, so she went to her Nichus. He told her to go away and he went out to the cornfield and took off his breechcloth and sat around here and there in the cornfield. He told the worms, 'If this is what you what to see, here it is!' After that the woman was never bothered by the worms again."

Let's try some verbs: I see him - Neyo [n-new-a-w (1-see-dir-3)]

This is a fairly simple verb, but the grammar, as you might guess, appears complicated enough to suit any linguist, surely. In the first position we see a prefix denoting the first person, the root follows, and then a direct action marker. If you are familiar with the Algonquian languages the action has to be marked. Certain categories of persons have to be marked and appear as a prefix regardless of whether it refers to an agent or a patient, so it is important to show which way the action is flowing.

Let's try: He sees me - Neyùkw [n-new-ëk-w (1-see-inv-3)]

We have the same prefix and the same suffix but they are different grammatical markers following the verb root indicating that the action is now inverse, flowing from the suffix to the prefix. If plurality is involved in either the patient or the agent there are additional suffixes which can be added.

Under the comments we outlined the various phonological processes that are involved in converting the underlying form into the surface form that is actually pronounced, but it is important to see what the underlying structure is. As in any complex language there is a very rational scheme although it is not always obvious from the surface form.

We should mention too that the main audience for the Lenape Talking Dictionary is the Delaware tribal members so you don't see things like use of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Bruce wanted to include that, especially in the analysis section, but we had to consider people who had older computers and our computer people told us there were very few ways in which you could properly display IPA symbols. One suggestion was to put them on there as JPEGs which would not make it very easy if we had to make changes in the future so we decided to use the orthography throughout.